

**A Visit to Luang Por Gunha (18<sup>th</sup> February – 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017)**

Most of the teachings in this document are based on notes made from memory, while some of the questions and answers were transcribed from recordings. I tried to write down answers as they were translated, so if the English seems a bit funny – that is why! Hope you enjoy!

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**1. General Advice**

- To most monastics – **stay put, keep the vinaya well, be a giver not a taker and don't have conflict with others.**
- **A monastery is like a family, with a mother and children. If the mother only gives food to one child, the others will be unhappy.**
- **The way of the world is to follow desires and moods, as monastics that is not our way.**
- **We must look after others, even if they do not look after us.**
- **Be a giver not a taker. Don't impose your way of doing things on others, that is not being a giver.**
- **Most of the forest monks, they are lazy. They are attached to peace and comfort.**
- **Don't argue with others. Smart people don't argue. No matter what anyone says, just listen.**
- **If you have bad thoughts or bad speech, you are reducing your parami.**
- **Don't think of sense desire. These are all in the past. If you keep thinking of these things, our mind is constantly going through the cycle of birth and death.**
- **If you have no mudita or metta your mind and heart are small and narrow. Luang Por's heart is wide open. Wider than the ocean. That is why he can be friends with everyone. There is no one he cannot be friends with.**
- **If you are selfish you cannot go to nibbana. We must be self-sacrificing. In order to be unselfish, we should help others and do service.**
- **Everyone is focused on the Nibbana that is far away, they do not look at the Nibbana close by.**
- **Be happy doing work.**
- **When you bow to the Buddha, be happy.**

## **2. Questions asked from LP Gunha.**

**Q1.** *When I am angry, I can see that it is causing me suffering. I look at how it feels and can see it is hurting me, that it is not good for me. Why is it that I cannot let go of the anger, if I know it is not good for me?*

A1 – Before question was completely translated Luang Por answered – **“Don’t think about it. When you are angry don’t think about it, just wait and it will pass.”**

**Q2.** *Does LP have any advice on how to develop Mudita?*

A2 – **“Mmm. it is good to develop Mudita and Karuna because it calms the mind. When we see that someone is smart, be happy for them. Sometimes when we see someone is smart, we want to make them less smart. Without mudita we can practice only with our own group. If we have no mudita they cannot stand to see you all wearing so many different colours, they will ask you to change to the same colour...”** While Luang Por spoke about making someone ‘less smart’ he made the action of cutting part of his hand off. ‘Wearing so many colours...’ referred to all the different types of nuns who were there.

**Q3.** *They say that the last thought moment is very important? How can we prepare for this?*

A3 – **“Don’t worry about this. The present moment is important. When Luang Por Chah was in a coma, sometimes he would stop breathing. They would take me to Luang Por Chah, to see what was happening. I would check his mind and he was in Nirodha-Samapatti. So when we practice well, even though our body fails our mind can still be OK.”**

**Q4.** *There are many very good monks in Thailand, seems more than in other places. Why is this?*

A4 - **“Wherever there are arahants there will be good monks.”**

**Q5.** *How can I best support my parents?*

A5 – **“Practice well and then you will have the wisdom to see how to best support your parents.”**

**Q6.** *Why did LP become a monk?*

A6 – After laughing... **“A monk’s life is easy. You don’t have to work, don’t have to pay the rent, don’t have to buy the food. People give you the best of the best. And they pay respects to you too!”**

**Q7.** *Is there any advice that LP Chah gave you which was helpful to your practice that you could share with us?*

**A7 – “Luang Por Chah’s teachings are easy, simple, like mine. Very simple but hard to do. Vinaya is important...”**

**Q8. Does Luang Por see any value in learning Pali and studying the Suttas and Vinaya?**

**A8 – “If you wish to follow the way of LP Mun, LP Maha Boowa and LP Chah then no need to study much. They did not study much. I did not study much. I am not well educated, but highly educated people come to see me.”**

**Q9 (transcribed from a recording 07-03-2017).** *When we are doing work or in our practice, when things are going well, we can feel pleased with ourselves and this can give rise to a sense of conceit or arrogance, does Luang Por have any advice on how to deal with this?*

**A9 – “You should know your mind. We are not better than other people because we still cannot fly. If we are really good in practice, we can fly. You still have to take the aeroplane. So now when you are going back to Perth you still need cars and aeroplanes. So you can teach yourself like this. After you return back you will need to increase your sense of duty, diligence and to be happy in work. The greatest thing in the world is without greed, hatred and delusion, without self and ego. The feeling that you are better than other people is not the greatest thing.”**

**Q10 (transcribed from a recording 07-03-2017).** *I read in a dhamma book that some teachers say that there is something outside of the five khandas?*

**A10 – “Don’t be interested in this. The books cannot end your suffering. So in the future when your practice is improving (when the dhamma is big in your mind), you need to help other people too. When you are practising and you feel the happiness and end suffering, we don’t need to read the books, because the dhamma is not in the books. The dhamma is within ourselves, our body, our behaviour, our politeness, our speech. Speak to other people gently in good words, so that you can teach other people. And after this you can turn to teach yourself and at the same time you can teach other people. And your parents will be very proud of you. You must do it; you can do it. Because your parents are good, they are not lazy persons... Most of the monks they are lazy, because they don’t need to rent the house, don’t need to buy the food and people pay respects to you. So you need to think about this. If you don’t think about this, you are just wasting your time.”**

**Q11.** I feel very inspired, peaceful and happy with Luang Por. Also when I go to hear Ajahn Brahm talk at Bodhinyana, I feel happy and peaceful and inspired. Then the practice is easy. But it is hard to keep the momentum when I am back at the monastery, in my daily routine. Any advice?

**A11 – “Just be happy working.” (!)**

**3. Teachings taken from “Sukhamo Sirowat” publication – published on 5th March 2010 (English translation for this publication was done by Ajahn Nyanadhammo)**

- Effort must be made today. Do not let the time and opportunity be wasted because this life of ours is blessed. Being human is a dignified state, though if we do not attentively practice Dhamma, life will be no different from being dead because we have died from developing the virtue of the Noble Ones.
- What is religion? Religion means selflessness and renunciation. If a person is unselfish and gives to others, he or she can be said to have a religion.
- In reality, there is nothing. It is only thinking and proliferation of the mind.
- Pleasure only appears as such, because we imagine it that way; pain only appears so, because we imagine it as such.
- Make the mind completely empty for one or two minutes. This will be of immeasurable benefit and merit. This is a way to practice for Enlightenment.
- True wisdom grows from tranquility and clear mindfulness in the present and can extinguish suffering in every moment.
- The first bond of existence is Personality-Belief. We must strive to eliminate this bond by knowing and clearly penetrating to the truth of suffering. Because in reality, there is only suffering that arises, suffering that persists, and suffering that passes. Apart from that there is nothing else. There is nothing but this suffering.
- In meditation, we must first hold in the mind the word “Buddho” in all bodily postures. If instead, we skip this step and go directly to an insight development, our mind will not have a firm foundation. Consequently, wisdom meditation through insight will not be as effective as it should be or it will not work at all, and it may instead lead to agitation and worry. This is thinking meditation not insight meditation since it is just speculation or imagination we misunderstood and wrongly believe that we attain insight.
- All the ‘Enlightened Ones’ teach us that we should die before death. This means that the defilements of mind should die before we do.
- If we do not earnestly practice Dhamma, we will not gain satisfactory results. What we gain may not be able to compensate for what we lose. But if we set out mind to it, we would surely make profit. Everyone must do it on his/her own. It is a job for each individual like eating or breathing.
- We need to practice at any moment, anywhere, any time, no matter what, as if we have no other choice. It’s out of compassion that we train in this way. If it wasn’t for compassion, beings would be left to their own devices. So it is because of compassion that we have this strict disciplined training to make us strong.
- We must be firm, patient and endure. How much do we endure? We endure to the point where, if we have to die, then so be it.
- Some people who wish for Enlightenment don’t want to take up the training or keep the precepts. If they think like this then they are already off the path. There are no shortcuts. The quickest ‘way’ is by virtue and selflessness.

- Follow the Buddha's advice. Practice well, practice straight, practice rightly, and practice properly. How long one has been ordained as a monk or nun is insignificant.
- To climb a mountain, takes effort. To cross the ocean, takes hardship. To conquer the mental hindrances, one faces them straight on.
- Adhere to virtue and practice daily. Devote your life to the Buddha and the Truth will be your measure at death.
- With no doubt in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, wholeheartedly devote your life to Dhamma practice with absolute commitment to the Buddha.
- We should not look to the future but let go in this present moment. Let go profoundly and completely.
- If your mind stays in the present moment, you can solve problems all day long. When we resolve those problems, wisdom will also arise continuously.
- Studying the external world is endless; the study of the Buddha's teachings has an end purpose. To end the "cycle of birth and death".
- The Buddha taught us how to make the mind relaxed by breathing in and out comfortably. It is not our task to make it calm or excited, it is our duty to just breathe in and out comfortably. It is not for us to control or manage the mind, or stand in the way of birth, old age, sickness, death, praise and blame. We are obliged only to breathe in and out, with ease and peace.
- Reflect on how the Buddha put his mind at ease, then incline your own mind to that same relaxed, calm state. Allow your mind to be cool and calm, cheerful and joyful. Let your mind smile internally and be happy with mindfulness and clear comprehension in a comfortable way.
- We must contemplate this body thoroughly until every single organ and part of this body is manifest and clear in our mind. Meditate and contemplate until our mind reaches a base of peace. The Buddha and our teachers taught us this way.
- When we are standing, walking, sitting or lying down, we must endeavor to be a good person, to be selfless and motivated by that goodness. If one can keep the five, eight, ten, or two hundred twenty seven precepts purely and unblemished, the one is called a "Blessed one" or the "one who sees the Dhamma".
- We must practice to be attentive of the real conditions of reality, here and now in every physical posture, because the mind has no posture, only the body. It's in the present moment that we should possess virtue, concentration and wisdom.
- Perceive everything as a fake, a deceit, a mirage flickering in the wind that comes and goes. Our tendency is to run after that mirage floating on the breeze, chasing after meaningless experiences that are endless suffering.
- Contemplate repeatedly on birth, old age, sickness, death and not-self. Our struggle is to understand the freedom that arises from seeing non-self.
- If we keep our precepts purely, then concentration will be purified. The Buddha taught virtue for living in the world and the higher virtues for Enlightenment. These higher virtues are the aim of Buddhism

- Real Dhamma practice is not actually to 'let go of anything' or to 'hold on'. It's neither to progress or regress, because this Dhamma practice we do is not like we read about in the books.
  - The type of ordination which yields great merit and great fruit is that which is dedicated to Dhamma practice. Whatever and however the Buddha taught us, that is how we practice. In this way we discard the self and take up the ways of the Buddha.
  - Our practice must be established around duties and activities in the present. This will be the vehicle to peace.
  - See the danger and harm in this endless cycle of birth and death. Just as a poor person sees the pain in poverty.
  - When we close our eyes we cannot see who is coming or going. It's only when we open our eyes fully that we see clearly. Having our 'eyes open' means here, having mindfulness and clear comprehension; keeping the mind in the present moment, relaxed and at ease.
  - The path of Dhamma practice is not like traveling forward or backwards, or even stopping anywhere; but it is just abiding in virtue, peace and wisdom. The Buddha-Dhamma is for real practice. We must put it into practice and constantly improve our performance.
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- We take this body, made up of flesh and bones that is subject to death, and use it as a vehicle for goodness.
  - Keep reminding yourself that you might only live for another day and night, and to strive now to do good deeds.
  - Sometimes the idea of enlightenment seems so far away, and the more we read about it the further it seems. But if we turn inward and return to the Now, then it feels closer and gets easier and we will know the way to easily extinguish all suffering.
  - We must go against the stream of our desires with patience and perseverance, submitting to the training and discipline of the Buddha which is the highest and most supreme. We should be willing even to sacrifice our lives, because if we don't submit to the practice, the practice will be a mere philosophy.



**4. Photos from March 2017**

